

## Reporting the Future with New Media Art: SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul

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### ABSTRACT

The 9th Mediacity Biennale (September 1 – November 20, 2016) is exhibited in all four buildings of the Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA), spreading the new media exhibition widely across the city. The exhibition is about the future in today's world. This article reviews the exhibition, highlighting the forward looking and tomorrow focused new media artworks.

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*“Two Billion Light Years of Solitude (Loneliness)”*

*On a small sphere*

*Earthlings sleep, wake, work*

*Once in a while they wish they had friends on Mars*

*I have no idea*

*what Martians do on their small sphere*

*(neriring or kiruruing or hararaing — maybe they sleep'leep, wake'ake, work'ork)*

*But once in a while they wish they had friends on Earth*

*That's for sure.*

*The universal force of gravity is*

*the mutual attraction of loneliness*

*The universe is warped*

*That is why we are drawn to each other*

*The universe keeps on expanding*

*That is why we all feel anxious*

*with two billion lights years of loneliness*

*facing me, I sneezed.*

*(Tanikawa Shuntaro 1952, combined translation by Takaka U. Lento, William I. Elliott and Kazao Kawamura) [1]*

For the first time since the SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul was launched in 2000, the 9th Mediacity Biennale (September 1 – November 20, 2016) is exhibited in all four buildings of the Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA), spreading the new media exhibition widely across the city. Each building, Seosomun Main Building, Nam-Seoul Living Arts Museum, Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, and Nanji Residency has its distinct programming, thoughtfully organized and carefully curated by Artistic Director Beck Jee-sook. This Biennale focused on more female and non-Euro-American participation than ever before in the Mediacity Biennale history, and can be defined by its inclusionary visions of culture and community. The title of this year's Biennale, *NERIRI KIRURU HARARA*, recounts our human desire to imagine ourselves as Martians and to liken humans speaking in Martian tongue of a future that, “maybe they [as in martians] sleep’eeep, wake’ake, work’ork,” like the way we humans sleep, wake, and work. The title that premises the Biennale begs for the longing for one another, humans and martians, humans and subhuman and the new technological other. The exhibition is about the future in today's world.

Originating from a 1952 Japanese poem “Two Billion Light Years of Solitude (Loneliness)” by Tanikawa Shuntaro, the title conjures curiosity and estrangement of something either of the forgotten past or uncertain future. The work is also a lingual portal that connects both, bridging urgency and awareness of today's worlds to include future predicaments of utopic-dystopic promises. By coupling the Martian title with the new media works represented in the Biennale, the exhibit showcases “the belief that art can be a future language, an imaginative language, and an alternative language,” and likens the artist's role not only to foreign bodies or commonly perceived outcasts of society, but to being a little superhuman, thinking and being avant-garde (ahead of time), making work about today to *report the future with new media art*. [2]

Beck states that phrase “neriri, kiruru, harara,” invented by the poet and derived from Japanese words, emphasized how by “invent[ing] his own Martian language, we can say contemporary artists are like Martians, in that they invent languages that we cannot understand or they are deconstructing and rebuilding a new language.” [3] As the artistic director explains: “We wanted to work with artists who experiment with how these languages can function in a fictional dimension, or artist who might also be trying to have a conversation with beings that are unknown or unrecognizable.” [4]

Being drawn to each other and feeling anxious about the universe (as represented in Shuntaro's poem) describes our human-alien(other) condition, and by being beyond human, as artists are imagined in this exhibition, they take on themes that relate simultaneously to the past, present, and future. “Not Futuring Right” and “Future with a Heavy Past” seems particularly pertinent given our history of violence and societal lack of moral compass. The audience views words alongside what seems like musical notations in charcoal on paper. Here Christine Sun Kim spouts ideas of reincarnation and the cycling of futures with technologies. At the site of her interactive installation *Game of Skill 2.0* people are forced to walk in straight lines in order to hear her sound piece about the story of herself told by her grandmother. As a Korean-American who is deaf, she has made a work about the impossibility of coherent language and communication, and shares her the experience of separation in the world of sign language by providing a user-friendly gaming

strategy. The audience is able to experience the fine line and balancing act of communicating differently. The static and chopped up sound piece is spat out only when the antenna of her computerized sound box is perfectly aligned with the line of velcro above the participant. Two velcro zigzagged lines then occupy the exhibit space, making the game a bit of a struggle. However, the outcome of the interaction is one that weaves loving words, comforting sounds, and poetic gestures, bridging a kind of intimacy with the artist and the interface.

*Not Futuring Right*

*Future Hiding Its Marks*

*Future with a Heavy Past*

*Future Full of Memories*

*Future in an Identity Crisis*

*Future Being Secretive*

*All Day Future*

*Displaced Future*

*Future with Distance*

*All Night Future*

*(Written in charcoal drawings by Christine Sun Kim)*



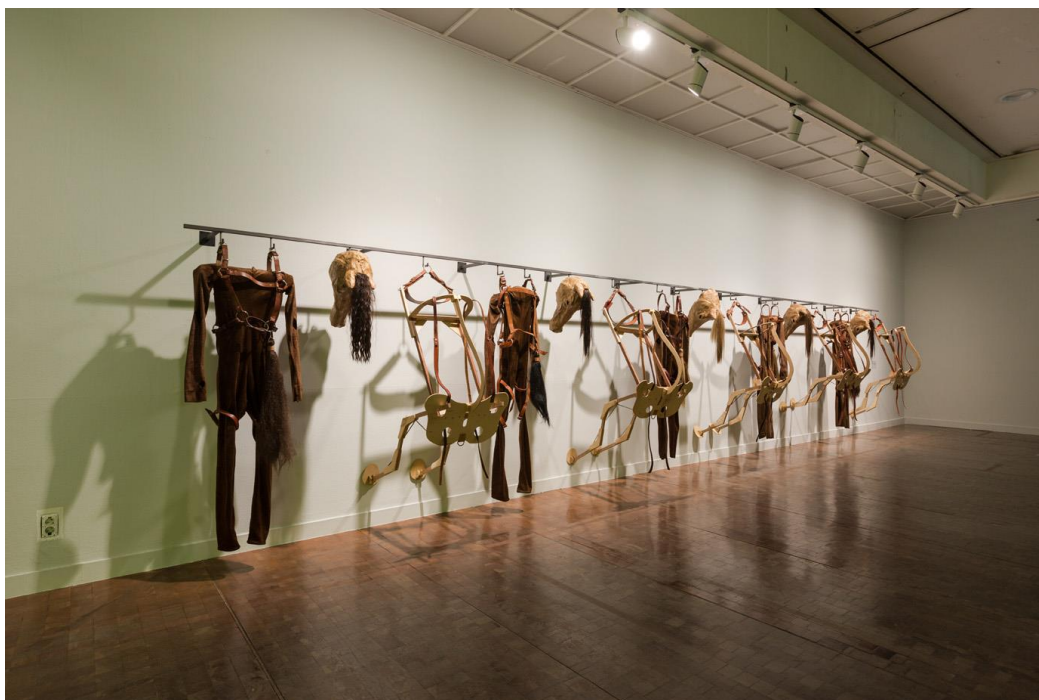
***Figure 1. Christine Sun Kim, Game of Skill 2.0, 2015, velcro, magnets, custom electronics, voice of the artist's grandmother In Sam Kim, dimensions variable.***

Christine Sun Kim, *Not Futuring Right; Future Hiding Its Marks; Future with a Heavy Past; Future Full of Memories; Future in an Identity Crisis; Future Being Secretive; All Day Future; Displaced Future; Future with Distance; All Night Future*; 2016, Charcoal on paper, 30 x 40 cm. Installation view at Seosomun Main Building.

Sun Kim's work is an exemplary piece that highlights the aspect of enhancing ability from disability, which becomes a major discursive theme that resonates throughout the exhibition. What becomes evident in the exhibition is the process of giving and gaining access with art, such as in community outreach, the selection of artworks that include honing in on human ability and access that subverts notions of normality and uniquely ties notions, and celebrations of abnormality with the what is foreign and alien. Human access to the future is included in understanding the multiple possibilities of access, all inspired by the cultural awareness of disabilities.

## PART I: THE VERY ABLE BIENNALE FOR TOMORROW

A month before the opening of the Biennale main exhibitions, the Buk-Seoul Museum of Art (North Museum) hosted "The Uncertainty School," which was led by artist Taeyoon Choi. This institution engaged disabled communities along with the Nam-Seoul Living Arts Museum (South Museum) who hosted a month-long retreat community arts project called "The Village." Organized by artist Yang Ah Ham the museum invited other artists to give workshops and lectures that would stimulate educators in the area, especially those in the arts. The Nanji Residency which has been given the nickname of 'love residency' for the many couples who meet there became a thriving national and international studio residency that runs all year. Eduardo Navarro's *Horses Don't Lie* performances were scheduled during the biennale at Nanjicheon Park of the Nanji Residency. His work is inspired by learning how autistic children learn empathy by touching horses and makes horse-like head gears as human prosthetics, and was made for a choreographed performance series collaboration with Myung-Shin Kim and other performers. The works were on display at the Main building when not being used at Nanji. At the entrance of main building Sara Hendren's wooden floor structure titled *Slope: Intercept* is installed to both be a dynamic ramp and slope for wheelchairs for the users. The artwork overcomes passivity by combining a platform and play site for skateboarders. Alice Sheppard *Under Momentum* performed a beautiful dance piece whilst seated in a wheelchair.



***Figure 2. Eduardo Navarro, Horses Don't Lie, 2013, performance, horse clothes and performance instructions, dimensions variable, installation view at Sesomun Main building.***



***Figure 3. Eduardo Navarro, Horses Don't Lie, 2013, performance, horse clothes and performance instructions, dimensions variable, Performance view at Nanji Residency area, photo by Ji-A Lee.***



***Figure 4. Sara Hendren, Slope: Intercept, 2016, mixed media, dimensions variable, commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016, installation at the entrance of Sesomun Main building, performance Under Momentum in collaboration with Alice Sheppard.***

Contemporary art biennales—often viewed as synonymous with an Olympics in the arts—have become more accessible and open to the public with outreach. Such forward thinking and a sense of a shared future is here focused on the community rather than merely the medals of merit set by the art world. The General Director of SeMA, Kim Hong-hee comments on the original intentions of the museum buildings and its community outreach being placed in the forefront in the biennale:

“The Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, a community friendly museum, operates Uncertainty School, which explores physical and mental disabilities. Here, it questions the legitimacy of the dichotomy that exists in, for example, the notions of normal vs. abnormal and certain vs. uncertain, and attempts to deconstruct ordinary language and existent epistemology. Nanji Residency, a space for artists from home and abroad, shows works that address the issues of the encounter between humanity and animals, of ecology, and of environment. This shows a site-specificity in which it takes into account the fact that Nanji Residency was built on Nanji Island, which was formerly a site for a municipal garbage dump.” [5]

The *Uncertainty School* project by Taeyoon Choi held classes that welcomed disabled Koreans to explore art, technology, and disability through creative computer programming, online publication and exhibition, and video storytelling. The program was aimed at subverting common societal prejudices that affect those who are disabled or different, with emphasis on the promise of uncertainty. The *Uncertainty School* seminars invited participation from artists Hendren, Sheppard, Navarro, and others; Choi collaborated with Sun Kim on the *Future Proof* performance

in the Main building's Project Gallery, which was dedicated to a fully programmed workshop during the Biennale exhibit. Choi's workshop statement stated: "Access and culture can be in conflict with one another. Art can open up the public discourse, imagine what is not imaginable. Art as a tool to change policy." [6]

There was an explosion of cooperative activities by artists coming together to lead workshops, programs and performances, and all the museum buildings were charged and fully active prior and during the Biennale.

In Choi's ink drawing *Unlearning Diary*, the artist asserts that "unlearning is like untangling bias and prejudice. Our body is a machine for living, an apparatus for intervening the system, a medium to bring us together. We can use our bodies to unlearn." [7] The mural is situated next to Cinthia Marcelle's *Sobre Este Mesmo Mundo (This Same World Over)*, an installation featuring a chalkboard's layers composed of erased teachings, a collection of erased chalk dust becoming the ground underneath. The Main building's lobby mural *Cosmic Interluded Orbit*, done over eight straight days by Kemang Wa Lehulere, is an intricate chalk drawing on board that is dedicated to his aunt who was shot during a student riot in South African during post-apartheid; as a disabled person today, she and he continue to collaborate on projects together.



***Figure 5. Taeyoon Choi, Unlearning Diary, 2016, ink drawing, dimensions variable, on walls of the Buk-Seoul Museum of Art.***

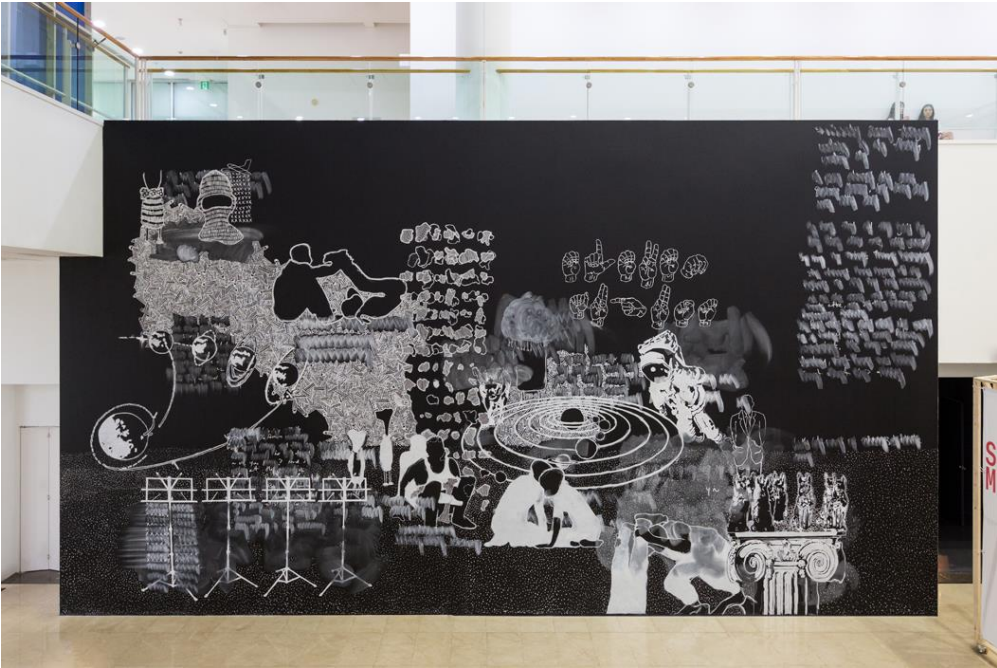


***Figure 6. Taeyoon Choi, Unlearning Diary, 2016, ink drawing, dimensions variable, on walls of the Buk-Seoul Museum of Art.***



***Figure 7. Cinthia Marcelle, SOBRE ESTE MESMO MUNDO (THIS SAME WORLD OVER), 2009-2010, installation, erased blackboard, powder of chalk and eraser, 120 x 840 x 10.2 cm, installation view at Buk-Seoul Museum of Art.***





***Figure 8. Kemang Wa Lehulere, Another Cosmic Interluded Orbit, 2016, Chalk on black board, 590 x 1,070 cm, commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016, on the walls of Sesomun Main Building.***

In Amanda Cachia's critical essay, "'Disabling' the museum: Curator as Infrastructural Activist," she writes,

*Apart from personally identifying as physically disabled, in my fifteen years as a curator working in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and now the United States, I noticed that conventional art history does not account for intellectually and physically disabled subjects and their accompanying atypical bodies through the art museum and their curated exhibitions, through commercial art galleries and biennials, or the entire exhibition complex structure. I rarely come across any substantial or critical engagement with disability and access in curated exhibitions at large-scale or medium-size museums and art galleries. Of course, a small number of patronizing and demeaning representations have appeared in art genre presentations such as 'outsider art' but these derogatory constructs have generally failed to be challenged by art historians, critics, curators and artists. I argue that it is time to offer a revision to the negative constructs by addressing how contemporary art by both disabled and non-disabled artists can resonate with the complex embodiment of disabled corporeality. It is important to build a new vocabulary and methodology around curating disability and access in challenging and stimulating ways." [8]*

Having curated a series of exhibitions relating to disability and accessibility, she approached what she calls "curating disability" with four possible working categories; "disability as a critical theme, disability agency, disability in discursive programming, [and] access as a creative

methodology.” [9] The Mediacity Seoul 2016 is fully aware that today’s technological agency that promotes accessibility and collaboration with those impaired or disabled and how that exchange only helps with awareness and deeper understanding to bridge gaps in regards to access. Here, Beck connects the ability with the notion of foreign and alien, and the theme of the future, as reporting today’s cultural landscape of global awareness to those with disability is a next step for social justice post-feminism, multiculturalism, identity politics, postcolonialism, and the “global-local” in contemporary art worlds.

## PART II: HIGH AND LOW, HIP AND SERIOUS, THE CITY, CURATING WITHIN CURATING, A PROMISING FUTURE BIENNALE

With more than 80 artworks by 61 international artists and collectives from over 24 different countries, and almost a fourth of the works exhibited being newly commissioned work, the Artistic Director Beck’s *NERIRI KIRURU HARARA* is meant to bring international artists to Seoul through the museum SeMA. As the exhibition guide states, the intention is to “share not only information and knowledge but also intellect and emotion. As they learn from and befriend one another, they will investigate and propose multiple potentialities for diverse futures.” [10] “The exhibition “*NERIRI KIRURU HARARA* refers to the sum of artistic languages conceived in the future tense in the face of a hesitation first experienced by a city that has expanded through periods of rapid economic growth and democratization.” [11] Some artworks are syncopated with various stages of youth culture and millennials combined, while other works come across as dry, yet communicate a stark criticism of today’s broken modern societies. *Acts*, a six channel video loop by the group *Nastivicious*, projects an array of multiplying silhouettes of a man who morphs with interchanging English and Portuguese singing in upbeat pop music soundtracks, while people wear headphones as in silent rave parties. *Korakrit Arunanondchai*’s installation of a denim bed area and video displayed on a monitor bridges street art, music video and vj culture, as well as the allure of lounging. The artist’s alter ego character *Chantir* sings and dances with other youths of Thailand, amidst traditional sites and urban spaces of his country. In contrast to these very hip pieces, *Jeamin Cha*’s *Twelve*, a three channel video piece is both literal and interrogating. The work recreates the story of The Minimum Wage Commission based on earlier documents found on how the 2016 minimum wage was determined behind closed doors; twelve characters appear onscreen as talking heads, seated like figures in the last supper, all reenacting and representing documents of the meeting proceedings and questioning values of what makes a democratic state.



***Figure 9. Nastivicious, Acts, 2012, 6 channel video, 12 min. 7 sec., installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***



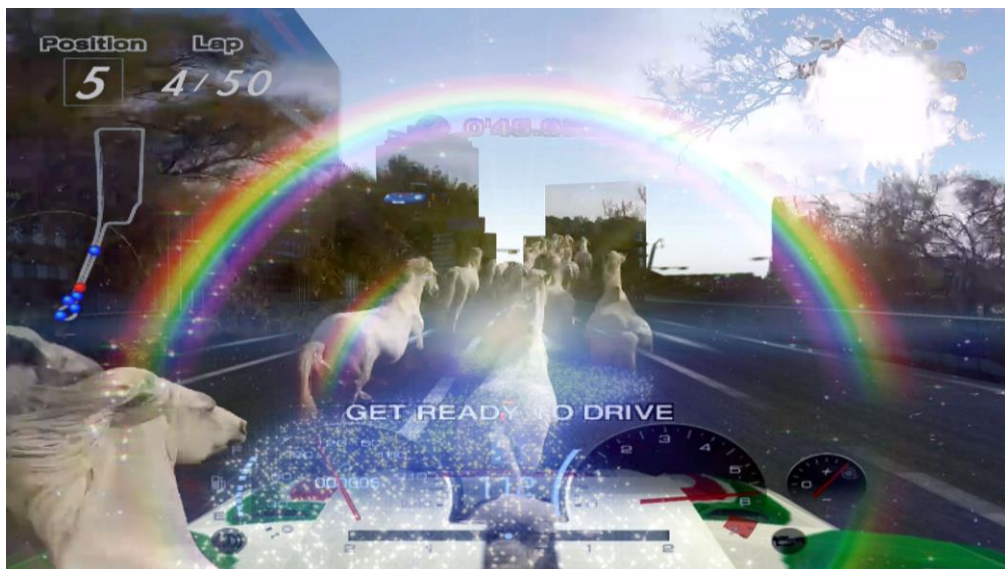
***Figure 10. Korakrit Arunanondchai, Painting with History in a Room Filled with People with Funny Names 3, 2015, single channel video, 24 min. 55 sec.; Untitled (Pillow), 2016, denim, foam, 162.6 x 162.6 x 45.7 cm (each); Untitled (Platform), 2016, denim, wood, 27.9 x 35.6 x 8.9 cm; installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***



***Figure 11. Jeamin Cha, Twelve, 2016, HD video, 3 channel, color, sound, 33 min. 33 sec., commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016, installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***

Seoul's place in Korean history is distinct. Traces of postcolonial trauma resonate throughout the bustling city as palaces and temples are restored to remember the dynastical power and spectacularity prior to Japanese colonization, the Korean War, modernization, and Westernization. But the relics of ancient city walls that once protected the city have dimmed as the city grew tenfold, further expanding with new satellite cities that surround the capital. The hybrid city that fuses the traditional with modern and the East and West sometimes forgets that North Korea is above, and that Seoul is only kilometers away from nuclear threat. A city that promotes its information superhighway with high speed internet and wifi that reaches the subways, Seoul's technology has become infamous, from breeding the new Kangnam celebrity race to Samsung 4D advertisements and Hyundai VR commercials.

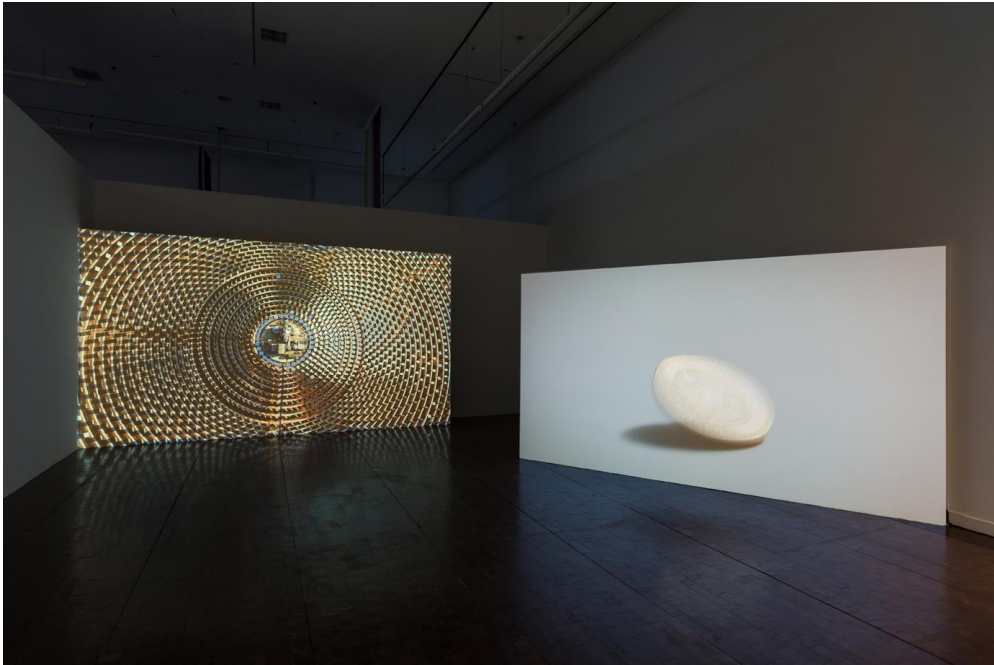
That is why the Biennale as a Mediacity Biennale can only take place in Seoul, a city that is ripe to showcase provocative art and to give a taste of contemporary art to the world, all the while considering in depth community and the future. The exhibition was held with grace and confidence in Seoul's responsibility as a promising leader in global contemporary arts. Kim Heecheon rolled out the red carpet for Seoul's high-speed internet culture in *Sleigh Ride Chill*, a part of a trilogy on contemporary Seoul and high tech society. The video effectively intertwined three narratives of leaking private information on the net, streaming the playing of gaming online, broadcast of "suicide club," where VR, faceswap, and other interface applications show a vision of tomorrow (aka "K-future"). Nicholas Mangan's off-grid solar power system on the roof of SeMA allowed a fully solar-powered video projection of the Aztec Sun Stone that was rediscovered at Mexico City. SeMA nicely hosted this green and energy-efficient technology piece about sun, energy, entropy, and human reliance on natural resources.



***Figure 12. Kim Heecheon, Sleigh Ride Chill, 2016, single channel video, full HD, 17 min. 27 sec., commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016, installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***



***Figure 13. Kim Heecheon, Sleigh Ride Chill, 2016, single channel video, full HD, 17 min. 27 sec., commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016, video still, courtesy of the artist.***



***Figure 14. Nicholas Mangan, Ancient Lights, 2015, 2 channel HD video***

The General Director Kim explains, “Mediacity Seoul 2016 accomplishes decentralization of the biennale programming by utilizing all of SeMA’s venues, and it enhances interactivity and alternativity through its well-organized programs that are socially relevant and engaging. As such, it illustrates the vision of a museum as a public space and social forum and suggests a biennale that ‘could be’ fluid, mobile, and symbiotic as a global art festival. It is in this sense that we expect Mediacity Seoul 2016 to become a shining example for prospective future biennales.” [12]

Stretching from the North to South, the two museums Buk-Seoul Museum of Art and Nam-Seoul Living Arts Museum are charged to take the arts out to the communities and to bring the public within. These two museums are punctuated by the central Seosomun Main Building which implodes the museum’s collection by packing and unpacking the main lobby of exhibition and making use of the old in new ways. With layers of curating within curating, Bik Van der Pol’s project *Married by Powers*, invites six other Koreans to freely curate from the duo’s pre-selected 139 artworks from SeMA’s art collection that amounts to near 4000. The team of six selected a range of artists, writers, scholars, and film directors, including Jung-Yeon Ma, Soyeon Jeong, Kyung Hee Youn, Park Hyun-jung, Joon-Hwan Jang, and Yeon-Yong Kim. This creative force alternately shared their selected works with their curatorial visions throughout the biennale’s duration, about every two weeks interchanging exhibition displays. The project thus emphasized the importance of contemporary Korean art collections, and their legitimacy as a series of exhibits. This one project is exemplary of the monumental spirit of the biennale, which carved out new ways to curate from a massive collection, thereby generating a mega-networked collective from an innovative curatorial process.



***Figure 14. Bik Van der Pol, Married by Powers, 2016, installation with 7 interview videos, dimensions variable, commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016, installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***

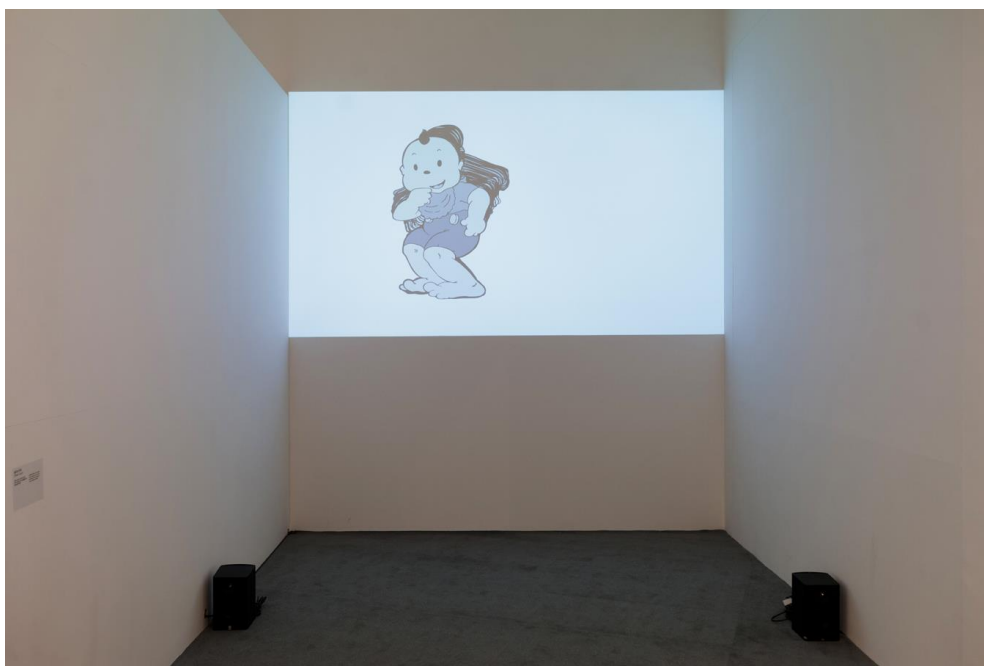
### PART III: THE TERROR REFLECTED TODAY SENDS US TO TOMORROW

After decades of cultural acceptance of humans beyond creation and the biological, today's notion of human as posthuman, hybridized, protestheticized, roboticized, chemicized, and plasticized allows virtual and physical add-ons to challenge notions of strict biology, essential gender and sex, and promotes new body-being and identity that is relative to one's political performativity. Yet, celebrations or suspicions of chimeras and trans(forming)-ing all unpacked by the familiar scholars such as Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, and Sandy Stone to name a few, leave new media artists to easily express the body in two strong visual narratives. One questions the tropes of Frankensteinian differentiation that no two monsters are alike; the other offers a revised vision of *Gattaca*'s trimmed clones, where all new creations and mutants are alike. Oliver Laric's video *Untitled*, morphs all possible characters ever portrayed in the 100 years of animation, film, and videos and shares the historically created animated chimera figures of all time in a glance. In Joo Hwang's *Vesti La Giubba (Put on the Costume)*, photographic light boxes of Korean service women show and echo identical impressions of women caged in portraiture, posing as models for cosmetic advertisements. As if right out of a science fiction film of scientifically-made bodies, their empty gazes are alike. A modern state with a Confucian tradition of gender roles generates a kind of cybertypes within the cultural systems of cybertyping, what Lisa Nakamura's mentions as techno-orientalizing, a concept that maps the cyborgian social reality and sci-fi dreams. While the techno-orientalism rhetoric should have

receded in the 90s, this exhibition presents another future dilemma of identity politics that includes the self and other, and a chaos of technological infusion.



***Figure 15.*** *Oliver Laric, Untitled, 2014–5, 4K video, color, sound, 5 min. 55 sec., installation view at the Buk-Seoul Museum of Art.*



***Figure 16.*** *Oliver Laric, Untitled, 2014–5, 4K video, color, sound, 5 min. 55 sec., video still, courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton, Berlin.*





***Figure 17. Joo Hwang, Vesti La Giubba [Put on the Costume], 2016, photography, lightbox, 190 x 65 cm (each), installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***

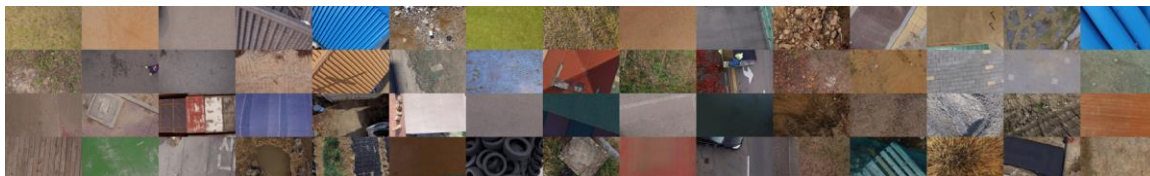
The techno-reality of self and ‘other’ as a monster is rendered guilty due to historical and social trauma. Pierre Huyghe’s *Untitled (Human Mask)* is a chilling film that documents the single living human left behind after the 2011 Fukushima tsunami and nuclear plant explosion. The central figure happens to be a monkey with a young girl’s facemask, which was left behind in a traditional Japanese restaurant where she served guests’ wet towels and drinks. A beautifully carved *noh*-like mask forms the young girl’s face and hides the monkey. The shared trauma of the past is the only thing left behind, a kind of chimera non-human. This eloquent film that documents the monkey-girl with a stark curiosity shows a figure who occupies the deserted space that haunts our consciousness. Human guilt is amplified, as ideas of captivity, training, pedophilic horror, historical trauma, and cultural pain haunt the spatial psyche. Condensed in the theatre of the absurd, the circus of the monkey-girl’s prancing around the restaurant like the world is hers’ makes for a haunting and disturbed image.



***Figure 18. Pierre Huyghe, Untitled (Human Mask), 2014, film, color, stereo, sound, 2:66, 19 min., installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***

As in modern society, the past, present, and future collapses in these exhibits. Peak moments of heightened sensory overload brought on by a societal state of permanent emergencies underlay a fear of the other and the construction of enemy states. All seem to increase the anxiety of weapons of mass destruction that are readily at hand. Our detached social reality includes social media and digital wars, and every digital safety feature and rescue mode simultaneously alerts panic. We are happy when our friend alerts their safe status on Facebook from war or natural disaster zones, but without hesitation we quickly browse the net for immediate breaking news updates instead of reaching out in more humane ways.

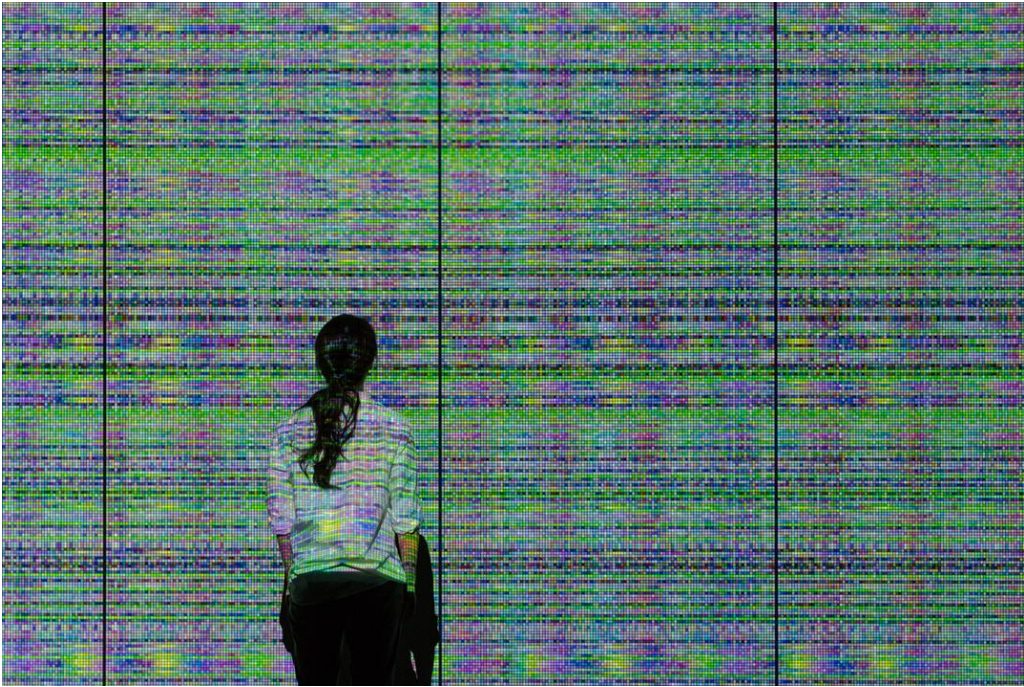
The post-9/11 mantra concerning safety and security is distilled with Ivan Navarro's famous 2011 *Untitled (Twin Towers)*. The artist makes it apparent that we are at an infinite fall in our Cartesian gridded and google-mapped world. Jang Suk-Joon's *Flatcity Project\_Flat54* multichannel video shows our flattened lives, experience through the drone's view, as we navigate Michel de Certeau's critique of flat-screened disembodied and anti-navigational lives. The Project for the New American Century put forth by a neo-conservative think-tank helps create a resounding century of terror that consumes our lives with wars and unbounded fear, all paralleled by an emotionally tuned out society and its constant hyper drama of conflicts. Norimichi Hirakawa's *the indivisible (prototype no.1)* computerized video shows audio-visual real-time processing of the computer, and is a field of static, buzz, and infinite vibration of the glitch aesthetic. The work is hypnotic, and shows a matrixed world, a numericized digital universe that mirrors our computerized state of existence.



***Figure 19. Jang Suk-Joon, FLATCITY Project\_Flat54, 2015, multichannel video, 6 min. 36 sec., installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***



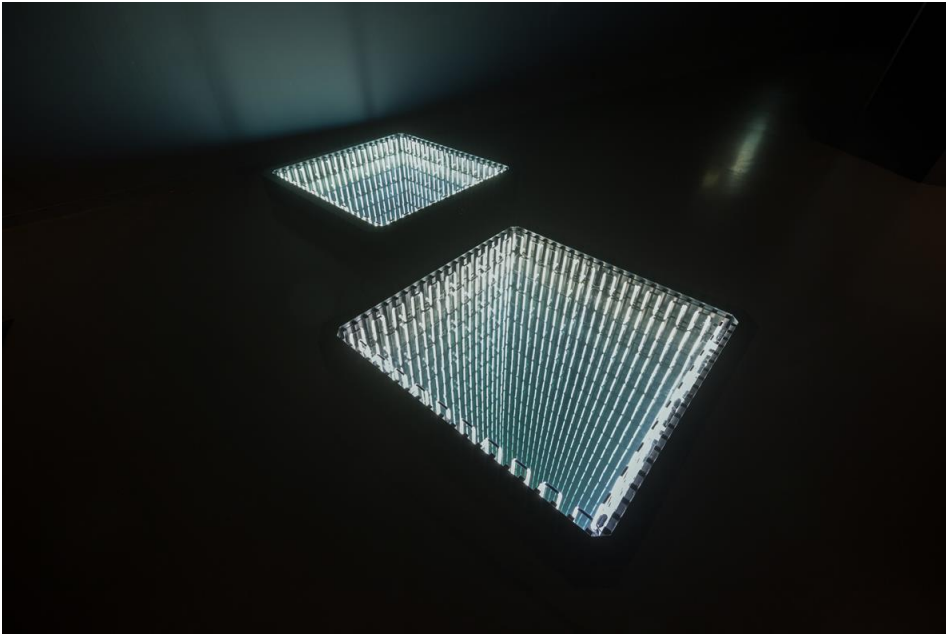
***Figure 20. Jang Suk-Joon, FLATCITY Project\_Flat54, 2015, multichannel video, 6 min. 36 sec., video still, courtesy of the artist.***



***Figure 21. Norimichi Hirakawa, the indivisible (prototype no. 1), 2015, DLP projectors, speakers, computer, computer program, dimensions variable, installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***

An earlier press release to the Biennale is revealing: “The works and projects participating in Mediacity Seoul 2016 allude, or relay suggestions to the following questions: how to formulate individual and common expectations out of unsought-for inheritances, be it war, disaster, poverty or displacement; how to generate as many versions of futures as possible and imagine plots of radical discontinuity, within the context of South Korea that is marooned in a peninsula-cum-island; and finally, how to enable time-slip into these futures through the language of art and the capabilities of media.” [13]

There has been no greater relief from fear and terror than the worlds of techno-escapism found in games, entertainment, cinema, amusement parks, and virtual and augmented realities. Much has been said about why Pokemon is a Go. We participate in the war on terrorism at our fingertips, flipping through news and podcasts of reporting on political debates and perpetually providing information to surveillance technologies as we play and shop, unconsciously weathering the forecasts of mass paranoia, and faintly praying for a sustained earthly tomorrow. Cinthia Marcelle and Tiago Mata Machado’s *Rue de Mao Unica (One Way Street)* video piece, projected onto a slanted wall in the middle of first floor gallery space, showed a constant bird’s eye view of flashes of street fights and protests, where people gather and disperse with signals of violence – so much so that the artists decided to include a Walter Benjamin quote on how “the destructive character sees nothing permanent.” [14]



***Figure 22. Ivan Navarro, Untitled (Twin Towers), 2011, neon lights, wood, mirror, one way mirror and mixed media, 147 x 147 x 19.5 cm (each), installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***



***Figure 23. Cinthia Marcelle and Tiago Mata Machado, Rua de Mão Única [One Way Street], 2013, video, 16:9, 8 min. 40 sec., installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***



***Figure 24. Cinthia Marcelle and Tiago Mata Machado, Rua de Mão Única [One Way Street], 2013, video, 16:9, 8 min. 40 sec., video still, courtesy of the artist and Galeria Vermelho.***

Oliver Laric's *Versions (Missile Variations)*, which is constructed by an airbrushed paint surface on an aluminum composite board, appropriates the 2008 Iranian Revolutionary Guard's firing of four missiles. The picture was known as manipulated version of the original, intended to hide the failure of their missile launch. As more images were created to parody through memes, the artist captures how reproduction plays a part in generating fear. Either dismantling weapons or strong-arming with propaganda is the world we live in. Osama Bin Laden death photos were not the original photos either, but they were created and went viral to help give a sense of false security. The heightened anxiety feels as if the human race will all take cover and bunker down to be secure and safe. Yang Ah Ham's *The Sleep*, a diptych video installation, shows bodies sleeping in a gymnasium that has been converted from a space of sports and activities to site of emergency covering.



***Figure 25. Oliver Laric, Versions (Missile Variations), 2010, airbrushed paint on aluminum composite board, approximately 25 x 40 cm (each), installation view at Seosomun Main Building.***

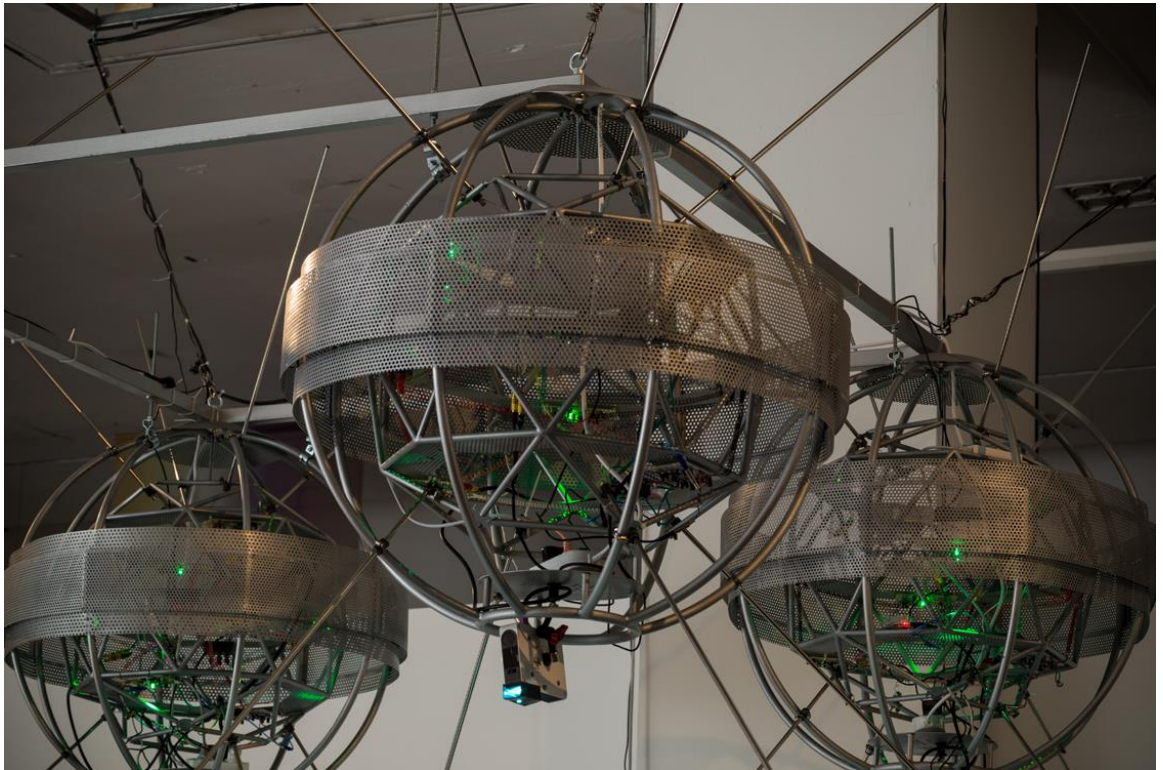


***Figure 26. Oliver Laric, Versions (Missile Variations), 2010, airbrushed paint on aluminum composite board, approximately 25 x 40 cm (each), installation view (detail) at Seosomun Main Building.***



***Figure 27. Yang Ah Ham, The Sleep, 2015, video installation, loop, dimensions variable, video still, courtesy of the artist; production supported by Mondriaan Fund, Netherlands; Goethe-Institut, Korea; Korea Artist Prize Promotion Fund, from SBS Foundation and National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea***

Venzha Chris installs four DIY satellites that capture outer space sound frequencies and projects the sound waves as video in his installation *Evolution of the Unknown #02*. For *Part-time Suite*, two Korean women collectively created a 3D VR experience *Wait for Me in the Collapsing Aircrafts*. Here a secret basement bunker from the 70s post Cold War becomes a space of wonder, and a relic of the severe political tension post Korean War. The military facilities space now found in Yeoido Island in Han River is considered a culturally historic space today, and the VR recreation of the site is giving people a way to view the place as mythical and mysterious, dangerous and apocalyptic, and a kind of end-of-the-world tour. The experience of the VR trip is like witnessing space in a coma, (with reference to the title of the piece that is the same title of a novel about a lover in coma), being helpless and claustrophobic, whether due to the bunkers or the social reality of how terror impedes our everyday actions.



***Figure 28. Venzha Chris, EVOLUTION OF THE UNKNOWN #02, 2016, Mixed media, Dimensions variable, Commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016 with the generous support from Kadist (San Francisco/Paris), installation view (detail) at Seosomun Main Building.***





***Figure 29.*** *Part-time Suite, Wait for Me in a Crashing Airship, 2016, 360-degree VR video, color, sound, 16 min. 20 sec., commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016, installation view at Seosomun Main Building.*



***Figure 30.*** *Part-time Suite, Wait for Me in a Crashing Airship, 2016, 360-degree VR video, color, sound, 16 min. 20 sec., commissioned by SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016, video still, courtesy of the artists.*

Collectively the artworks suggest that we are worn out by the business and industry of earthly destruction, and eventually there will be an end. As a future hope and solution, and survival to our earthly limitation, we only have outer space. Our desires and projections leap into *the final frontier, to boldly go where no one has gone before*. Where else to play-out our war and peace other than the outer realms? Extraterrestrial space and relations are yet the only ones left to conquer. Roland Barthes writes on “Martians,” “at first the mystery of the flying saucers was quite earthly” and all made in the U.S.S.R. where the concept had “shifted from the myth of combat to the myth of judgment.” [15] Barthes suggests that the Martian psychosis leaps from “the East/West confrontation” and “no longer the pure combat of Good and Evil” to the “the existence of a Super-Nature from the sky, for it is in the sky that the Terror exists.” SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016, NERIRI KIRURU HARARA, sends us to the future, where our own extended terror exists in space.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Two translated versions of the poem can be found on this blog site by Blythe Woolston in “One Poem / Two Translations,” November 5, 2010.  
<http://blythewoolston.blogspot.kr/2010/11/one-poem-two-translations.html>
2. Kim Hong-hee, “SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016,” in SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016 NERIRI KIRURU HARARA, in Exhibition Guide (Seoul, Korea: 2016), 5.
3. HG Masters, “Interview with Mediacity Seoul 2016 artistic director Beck Jee-sook,” in Art Asia Pacific: Biennales in Korea: Maria Lind, Beck Jee-sook, Yun Cheagab, Database of Korean content in AAP, Special Supplement Sept/Oct 2016, No. 100 (Gwangju, Korea: APP and Korea Arts Management Service), 11.
4. Ibid.
5. Kim Hong-hee, *ibid.*, “SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016,” in Exhibition Guide, 7-8.
6. Statement by Taeyoon Choi, Sara Hendren, Alice Sheppard, Nodl School, at the Uncertainty School. Published on MediacitySeoul page, Facebook, September 3, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/mediacityseoul/>
7. “SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016,” Exhibition Guide, *ibid.*, 121.
8. Amanda Cachia, “Disabling’ the museum: Curator as infrastructural activist,” *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, Volume 12 Number 3, (Taylor & Francis Online Journal: 2013), 257-289.
9. *Ibid.*, 260. Cachia also writes, “I’ve curated three exhibitions with disability-related content, with another scheduled for autumn 2014. These include ‘Medusa’s Mirror: Fears, Spells & Other Transfixed Positions’ for Pro Arts Gallery in Oakland, California (13 September–20 October 2011), ‘What Can a Body Do?’ for Haverford College’s Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery in Pennsylvania (26 October–16 December 2012) (<http://exhibits.haverford.edu/whatcanabodydo>), ‘Crippling Cyberspace: A Contemporary Virtual Art Exhibition’, co-sponsored and co-presented by the Common Pulse Intersecting Abilities Art Festival and the Canadian Journal of Disability Studies in 2013, and ‘LOUD Silence’, to be presented 6 September–6 December 2014 by the Grand Central Art Center at California State University in Santa Ana,” *ibid.*, 258.
10. “SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016,” Exhibition Guide, *ibid.*, 13.
11. *Ibid.*, 16.
12. *Ibid.*, 8.
13. SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016 NERIRI KIRURU HARARA, Press Release on E-Flux, <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/title-and-preliminary-list-of-artists-announced/>

14. Walter Benjamin, "The Destructive Character," 1931, Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927-1934, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999), 542, in "SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016," Exhibition Guide, *ibid.*, 3.

15. Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 27-29.

*All photos courtesy of the Seoul Museum of Art, SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016.*

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The tied SeMA Hana Media Art Award 2016 of SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2016 went to Christine Sun Kim and *Game of Skill 2.0* and Koakrit Arunanondchai and *Painting with History in a Room Filled with People with Funny Names*.

Jurors included:

Hong-hee Kim, General Director, Seoul Museum of Art

*Bartomeu Mari Ribas, Director, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art*

*Eungie Joo, Artistic Director, 5th Anyang Public Art Project*

*Hoor Al-Qasimi, President, Sharjah Art Foundation*

*Venus Lau, Artistic Director, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Beijing*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF SeMA BIENNALE MEDIACITY SEOUL 2016

Beck Jee-sook was Artistic Director of the 4th Anyang Public Art Project (APAP) Public Story, held from 2013 to 2014. Previously, she was Artistic Director of Atelier Hermès (2011-2014), Director of the Arts Council Korea (ARKO) Art Center and Project, Director of Insa Art Space (2005-2008). She served as Curator of Insa Art Space and Chief Curator of the Marronnier Art Center from 2000 to 2004. She co-curated *Activating Korea: Tides of Collective Action* (Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, 2007), *The Last Chapter—Trace Route: Remapping Global Cities* (The 6th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, 2006), and *The Battle of Visions* (Kunsthalle Darmstadt, Darmstadt, 2005). In 2002, she organized the international symposium on alternative spaces titled *Memory of Cities, History of Spaces*.

## AUTHOR BIO

Mina Cheon, MFA, PhD is a Korean-American new media artist, scholar, and educator. Currently a Full-time Professor at the Maryland Institute College of Art, she is a Board Member of the New Media Caucus (NMC) and Associate Editor of *Media-N Journal*, the author of *Shamanism and Cyberspace* (Atropos Press, Dresden and New York, 2009), and has written for the *NY Arts Magazine*, *Wolgan Misool*, *ArtUS*, and *Artist Organized Art*. She chaired NMC sponsored panels at the CAA in 2005 and 2012 and guest edited for *Media-N* with titles "Asia Effects in New Media" and "Magic and Media."